

Memo from

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

To: Dennis Flanagan
Scientific American

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re -- an article on the history of mol. biol.

I have never felt otherwise than that a series of flukes has impeded what should have been a more intimate history of relationships. I could even say that some of those past failures -- ages ago -- challenged me to 'try harder' in my efforts at publication about science in other media.

Your position is entirely persuasive, and although I have some regret about a lost opportunity to correct some of Stent's errors, I accept your invitation to write a separate article. I cannot avoid intersecting some of the issues that Stent raised (about 'premature discovery' rather than art vs. science) but will attempt to do this in a non-polemical ~~xxxx~~ fashion. Still, I trust you will permit me to mention that my formulation differs somewhat from that in his previous article in SciAm.

The longer compass of my piece will give the scope I would need for more careful explanation, and also for more attention to the historical antecedents of bacterial genetics as a twin to molecular biology. I am rather interested in the evident "postmaturity" of my own work, which by some view of the matter might have been done in 1905 as plausibly as in 1945 -- and may speculate on the reasons thereof.

I hope to have a ms, in your hands by Sept. 1 1973.



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